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## WHAT CONSTITUTES A SECONDARY SCHOOL

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LETTER FROM PROFESSOR JAMES E. RUSSELL

INVESTIGATION in the sphere of child psychology, tends to show that there is a decided change in the interests of children sometime about the twelfth or thirteenth year of age. Up to this time the child is acquisitive ; he seeks to add to his store of knowledge and to his stock of possessions ; he makes collections of birds' eggs, postage stamps, campaign buttons. Apparently his sole enjoyment is in the getting, rather than in its results. At about the age of twelve or thirteen, however, there appears the tendency to ask the all-important question, What is all this worth? He begins to seek the meaning of what he has done. He becomes, in short, speculative, philosophical. The child lives in a world essentially realistic ; the world of the youth is essentially idealistic.

Contemporaneous with these changes in the mental life are the momentous physiological transformations which mark the beginning of the adolescent period. The individual comes into his inheritance, an embarrassment of riches, the acceptance of which involves weighty responsibilities. The important pedagogic consideration is the enormous accession of physical and psychical energy. What shall be done with it? This question the educator must answer. Failure to recognize that a new era has dawned in the history of the individual will inevitably result in the fruitless dissipation of this priceless store or its expenditure along lines of doubtful benefit to all concerned. It is especially the duty of the secondary school to recognize the peculiar interests of the adolescent period and so to direct the expenditure of youthful energy that good may come instead of evil.

Our social order demands that every child shall be the better enabled through schooling to master his environment. The

school that does not leave its pupils better equipped for their life-work by reason of its teachings is unworthy of public support. The secondary school is no exception, it, too, must fit for life. But the theory—unfortunately in the ascendancy at present—which prescribes for college admission high school courses which are intended to give in four years a well-rounded, practical preparation for life, I believe to be thoroughly unpedagogical and utterly impracticable. It is impossible to devise a course of study for the high school which shall be at once the best possible preparation for college and for life. Pupils enter the secondary school intending to continue their studies for periods varying from one year to ten years. Will anyone say that the first four years of a ten years' course gives the best possible preparation for the future life of the high school graduate? On the other hand there is something wrong when a course of study naturally culminating at the end of four years is continued beyond that limit. On one theory alone can such things be explained, viz., that one and the same mill can grind out cooks and preachers all equally good. But this is no place to discuss the doctrine of formal discipline. In my opinion the American secondary school must go on multiplying courses (most likely by offering more elective studies) until every boy, and especially every girl, may find a course of study adapted to his or her peculiar needs, both in content and length of time.

The American secondary school, therefore, can recognize no distinctions of class or sex; it is for all who choose to enter therein. It cannot be defined according to length of curriculum; some of its courses may be only one year in length and others may extend over six or eight years. Secondary education properly begins at twelve or thirteen years of age; it lasts until such time as the individual is able to take up independent work, whether it be in domestic life, in the trades, in business, or in the university. It includes, in my judgment, the last year or two of the grammar school, all of the high school and a part of the college work. This is not saying that the high school should maintain courses of six or eight years in length; certain practi-

cal considerations must obviously be reckoned with in solving that problem. But it is evident that from the beginning of the period of secondary education to its end, there must be observed the strictest continuity both in the kind of work and the methods employed.

The secondary school, as I conceive it, is clearly differentiated from the continuation school, the technical school, the trade school, the commercial school, and all institutions of similar nature. It aims at the interpretation and unification of knowledge as well as its mere acquisition. At the same time it should give the youth the ability to use his knowledge for his own advancement, and the good of others. Neither a liberal education, nor formal discipline, nor yet practical training, should be the exclusive aim of the secondary school, but rather all these combined. Its highest aim is a liberal education by means of a discipline more or less formal, in order that the individual may be the better prepared for his life-work.

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#### LETTER FROM PRESIDENT SCHURMAN

DEAR SIR :— I have been considering your proposal to draw up a statement of what I mean by secondary education. I have concluded that it can be done in far fewer words than you suggest.

First, it may be defined according to age. Secondary schools are those whose pupils range from fourteen to eighteen. The name applies to all schools whose teaching is intended for pupils of such age, whether they are called academies, or commercial, manual training, or technical schools.

Secondly, it may be defined from the standpoint of the work done. Secondary schools are those whose courses end where college courses begin. In saying this, however, misapprehension must be avoided by adding that allowance must be made for the standing of the college. The grade of work is such as is out-

lined in the report of the Committee of Ten, where the phrase Secondary School is used as equivalent to High School or Academy (*vide* tables on pp. 34-35 and also tables on p. 37). I have hitherto used the phrase, myself, to mean just what the Committee of Ten have made it mean by their use of it in their report. The only exception is that it may be made to include the grammar school as well as the high school, and is currently so used I should consider either a correct use of the term. Most logically it includes grammar-school work. It is only historically, owing to the report referred to, that the application of the phrase is restricted to the high-school grade, and I notice in more recent educational reports that grammar schools are now usually included.

The function of the secondary school is indicated in what I have said. It is to take pupils who are through the elementary, or "three R's" grade, and provide suitable education for them until they have reached the proper age for entering college, namely eighteen, and have had a school discipline equal in bulk to that required for entrance to a reputable college.

Very truly yours,

J. G. SCHURMAN

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NOTE BY DR. MACKENZIE

UNTIL recently it mattered little what term was used. Certainly fifteen or twenty years ago preparatory education was not thought as important as it is today. The great increase in the salaries of the teachers of our fitting schools warrants the above statement. The public is coming to see that quite largely and finally the *direction* of a pupil's intellectual life is determined by the secondary school. Naturally, then, a more precise and uniform term should be set apart to describe this department of work, and I hope the editor of the REVIEW may get the subject successfully before the proper public.

The Scotch-Irish of Ulster, and the Scotch alone who "kept"

wonderfully good schools in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey, used quite uniformly the term academy and spoke of their college preparatory work as *academical*. In New England this stage of work was described by the term "fitting." A real Yankee always speaks of Exeter and Andover as "fitting schools," though he also calls them *preparatory* schools. Our most inconsistent and objectionable term is "High School." A "primary" grade should lead up to a "secondary"—it would seem—if regard is to be paid to sequence in terms and historical analogy. The effort now so hopefully begun by the Committee of Ten to articulate the public high schools to the college and university, calls for greater uniformity in writing and speaking of the educational work that is just below, or preparatory to, college work. There is a gratifying agreement in the use of the word that describes our higher education. American college connotes a perfectly definite grade of work and while the world laughs at our "university," it very generally respects our college. Then, too, the country over, we know what is meant by a primary or a grammar grade. But just between the grammar school and college we have :

1. "The Academy" (Scotch Irish),
2. "The Fitting or Preparatory School" (New England),
3. "The School" (English),
4. "The Secondary School" (French),
5. "The High School" (United States),

all appointed to do collegiate preparatory work. To add to our confusion and absurdities, manual training and commercial schools are now describing their work as "secondary."

It is an open secret that our older colleges are disposed to relegate more and more of freshman and sophomore work to the preparatory schools, and in this way to compel them to take on more of the character of the German Gymnasium, the French Lycée, and the English "School." In other words, after America has had sufficient experience with her present costly and wasteful system, she will reach the same conclusion British and Continental people have reached, and commit to the "Academy"

or "School" all merely disciplinary work, and end the long drawn farce in which our boys and girls pass from the increasingly large number of princely teachers of our schools to the increasingly large number of inexperienced tutors of our colleges.

But meantime we must have, as all civilized people have, an exact, uniform word or phrase, to describe this culminating stage of mere pupilage and discipline. The words "Primary," "Grammar" are historically and educationally good. They will never be changed in America. Do they not call for the third, Latin-French term "Secondary?" The acceptance or adoption of this word would permit the use of the very desirable word "School." Then the American gradation in term would be a happy, consistent, and descriptive one, "School," "College," "University."

JAMES C. MACKENZIE

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